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JI in Indonesia - Sidney Jones Article

FYI

From: William Comley [mailto:billcomley@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, September 18, 2005 9:18 AM
To: Office IET
Subject: Fwd: ST: The Renegade Bombers - JI Faction Builds Up Network

Some hopeful comments from Sidney . . .

Joyo@aol.com wrote:

From: Joyo@aol.com
Date: Sun, 18 Sep 2005 01:51:01 EDT
Subject: ST: The Renegade Bombers - JI Faction Builds Up Network
To: undisclosed-recipients;

The Straits Times (Singapore)
Sunday, September 18, 2005

The renegade bombers

As JI leaders rethink agenda, pro-bombing faction builds up network in Indonesia

By Felix Soh

RENEGADE members of the militant Islamist group Jemaah Islamiah (JI) have built an extensive network of bombers that stretches from Java to Mindanao - and even inside Jakarta's high-security Cipinang prison.

Revealing this, terrorism expert Sidney Jones said that the bombers were 'seriously dangerous' despite indications that an ideological struggle within JI has resulted in the faction which is against the bombing of Western targets having the upper hand.

Among the renegades, Malaysian bomb experts Noordin Mohamed Top and Azahari Husin may have formed a suicide brigade, said Ms Jones, the South-east Asia project director of the authoritative Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

Noordin and Azahari, who were involved in the Bali bombings in 2002, masterminded the JW Marriott hotel bombing in 2003 and the Australian embassy bombing last year. They are believed to be hiding in Central Java.

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Ms Jones made the revelations at a briefing on terrorism in South-east Asia to Asian and European newspaper editors who met in Jakarta recently. She herself was expelled from Indonesia last year by the Megawati government for tarnishing the country's image with reports that were 'untrue'.

Ms Jones, who speaks fluent Bahasa Indonesia, said her review was based on interviews, depositions of the interrogations of arrested JI members and sources from radical organisations.

The existence of a network of bombers meant 'we're still going to see attacks in Indonesia, but probably less professional and even less well-executed than in the past'.

Since the Bali bomb attacks, the bombers have made use of an ad hoc personal network, often drawing on JI members but not going through the official hierarchy to do it.

'These networks fall into four main categories: family, school ties, joint military training and shared combat experience,' she said.

Noordin and Azahari are being forced to look outside Indonesia for JI partners, relying on personal networks to do so.

Ms Jones said that the skilled bombers are all trying to get to Mindanao in the southern Philippines but they are encountering increasing difficulty getting there. This is due to the tighter security shield there.

The bombers are also strapped for cash. Previously, funds flowed to them from the Middle East and Al-Qaeda, the terrorist group they were affiliated to.

'They are now recruiting people to go to Mindanao for military training on a 'pay as you go' basis,' said Ms Jones.

The renegade bombers aside, her outlook for terrorism in the region is optimistic.

A prime reason for this is the serious rethinking within the JI leadership about the series of bombings or planned bombings against Western targets in Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines.

Behind these attacks and plans were mostly foreigners from Malaysia and Singapore and not Indonesians. They were the brainchild of the former Malaysian JI operational chief, Nurjaman Riduan Ismuddin, also known as Hambali, who was arrested in Thailand in August 2003 and is

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now reported to be under American custody in Jordan.

Instead of a global, anti-Western jihad, the anti-bombing faction wants to move JI back to its original agenda of building an Islamic Indonesian state.

'As we understand it, it's being led by a group that wants to sterilise JI by effectively purging not only the bombers but anyone who has been on a police wanted list,' said Ms Jones.

But the possibility of more bombings is far from over. 'I don't think the danger is over and I don't think terrorism can ever be fully eradicated,' she said.

She, however, added: 'In this region, we are in a much better shape than we were three years ago.'

Joyo Indonesia News Service

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